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SUBJECT: MUTLAK SAYS HE WANTS TO BE IN GOVERNMENT

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Sunni Hewan leader Saleh Mutlak told Poloff on May 23 that he believed SCIRI and perhaps President Talabani engineered the exclusion of his party from the cabinet. Mutlak claimed to be still very interested in being part of the government and was looking for Embassy support. He said, however, the Sunni street was very angry that Bayan Jabr was given a senior position and that the security Ministers had not been named. Mutlak said he had to show he was a "meaningful" partner in government to justify his decision to participate.

¶2. (C) Mutlak said that it was critical that the Ministers of Defense and Interior be non-sectarian and termed the demand for sectarian leaders in these ministries by Hewan's National Dialogue leader Sheykh Khalaf Alayan as "stupid or selfish." He said Tawfiq al-Yasiri was a good choice for the Interior Ministry and suggested that Nuri Ghafel al-Dulaymi or Ali Khalifa Hamid al-Abid would be appropriate for Defense, but that Muhammad Bara Najib al-Rubaie is no good. Former Speaker Hachim al-Hasani was fine for Mutlak but he doubted that Tawafuq would accept him.

¶3. (C) Mutlak would decide whether to participate in government after the security ministers are named. He would work with Tawafuq and the Kurds to get back the two ministries that were originally offered (Environment and Women's Affairs). He did not appear to believe that replacing the two current ministers -- one Kurdish Alliance, one Tawafuq -- would pose a problem. For himself, he wanted a position that would allow him to influence the dialogue in Iraq. A Minister of State without portfolio would not be sufficient but would be acceptable if it included a Vice Presidency in the National Security/Policy Council. (Note: By nature of Hewan's 11 CoR seats, Mutlak has a seat on the Council in any case. End note.) Poloff told Mutlak that he would have to work with PM Maliki to negotiate his potential inclusion in government and would have to temper his public statements critical of the national unity government if he wanted to be part of it.
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